

# The Redhead Gazette

SPRING 2002

PROMOTING THE GOALS AND ACTIVITIES OF THE HORICON NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE

## MORE ROOM TO LEARN AT THE HORICON NATIONAL WILDLIFE VISITOR CENTER

By Molly Stoddard, Ranger and Patti Meyers, Manager

Construction by W.B. Corporation (West Bend, WI) of the new addition to the visitor center at Horicon National Wildlife Refuge is complete. The visitor center is located on County Road Z, 3.5 miles south of State Highway 49, on the east side of the refuge.

The purpose of the addition is two-fold: to replace existing space which is inaccessible to people with special needs, and to provide a larger multi-purpose space for growing environmental education programs, special events, meetings, and training classes. In addition, community organizations are welcome to reserve the facility for meetings and retreats.

### Built to Accommodate

The finished addition is octagon shape to accommodate the largest number of people possible, a capacity of up to 165 seated theater style. It measures about 3,000 square feet in size with two large windows allowing a sweeping view of the marsh from indoors. A stepped ceiling, which goes up to 10 feet and then to 17 feet, is natural knotty pine, and a kitchenette provides ample space for catered meals or education equipment clean-up. The exterior matches the existing building's cedar siding, and the current viewing deck has been lengthened behind the addition with stairs added.

### Now Available For Use!

The final inspection took place on September 7, and the building is now available for use. 🦋



Drew McDermott,  
FWS Building Architect



Photos by Molly Stoddard

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# Celebrating a Century of Conservation!

by Molly Stoddard, Ranger

## YOU CAN BE A PART OF HISTORY! March 14, 2003

marks a milestone in the history of wildlife conservation in America – the centennial anniversary of the National Wildlife Refuge System, Wild Places for our Wild Things.

The goals of our national centennial celebration are:

- To increase System visibility
- To strengthen our infrastructure
- To enhance partnerships

### Dedicated to Conservation

The Refuge System is America's only network of federal lands dedicated specifically to wildlife conservation for the continuing benefit of the American people. It is a vital part of our national and natural heritage. Most refuges, including Horicon Refuge, were established to provide habitat for migratory birds.

### Established First in 1903

From his "bully pulpit" in the White House, President Theodore established the first National Wildlife Refuge in 1903 (tiny Pelican Island in Florida) to protect herons, egrets, and other colonial nesting birds from slaughter by market hunters. Market hunting had also taken its toll on Horicon Marsh by that time. He established more than 50 Refuges during his presidency, nearly all to protect species threatened with extinction, such as the bison.

### The Legacy Continues

Today, that legacy has grown to more than 530 Refuges, covering more than 94 million acres in all 50 states and several territories, a legacy well worth celebrating during the centennial. These Refuges range in size from a half-acre to 20 million acres and

include every kind of ecosystem in the country, from deserts and mountains to swamps and remote islands.

You can join in numerous opportunities across the country that will celebrate this historic occasion and focus a considerable amount of attention on the Refuge System. These events will serve to give future generations of Americans respect and pride for their natural heritage and ensure that Theodore Roosevelt's conservation legacy will be even stronger in the next century.

On a national level, a commemorative centennial calendar is being developed. The three categories are wildlife/plantlife, habitat, and people, and the calendar will be printed in spring 2002.

### Year of the Prairie

The Great Lakes-Big Rivers region of the Service has declared 2001 as the Year of the Prairie. Big Stone NWR (MN), Neal Smith NWR (IA), and Sherburne NWR (MN) have been identified as focus refuges.

- A special edition Jim Brandenburg collectible prairie poster is available for sale. The poster depicts a stunning image of stampeding bison and is suitable for framing.
- A traveling prairie exhibit is being developed and will hopefully visit Horicon NWR.
- Sherburne NWR has a special oral history project underway.
- The Blue Goose Centennial Celebration Bus Tour Express took place August 6 – 11, 2001 and included visits to several Minnesota prairie pothole refuges.

### Year of the Great Lakes

Our region has designated 2002 as the Year of the Great Lakes. Horicon



NWR, Ottawa NWR (OH), and Seney NWR (MI) have been designated as focus refuges.

### Here's what's happening so far...

- Patti Meyers and I are working with Discover Wisconsin Productions to create a TV broadcast called "Discover Wisconsin's Wildlife Refuges," highlighting the centennial. It will air twice to 1.4 million viewers each time, once in 2002 and again in early 2003. Horicon, Necedah, Trempealeau, Upper Mississippi, and Whittlesey Creek NWRs will be spotlighted.
- Patti and I also represented our region and the Great Lakes refuges at the annual Refuge Heroes Congressional Awards reception in July in Washington D.C., which also highlighted the centennial.
- Horicon Refuge is currently planning other possible events, such as a distance learning program, a road rally, and a critter cam exhibit for the visitor center. Stay tuned and watch for details as they develop!

### Big Rivers Refuges

2003 will highlight Big Rivers refuges: Upper Mississippi (MN, WI), DeSoto/Squaw Creek (MO, IA), and Mark Twain (IL, MO, IA). In 2003, many refuges plan to host a public event and bury a time capsule on refuge property.

Our Great Lakes-Big Rivers Region leads the nation in regional centennial planning and projects. We have the support of our regional management, a motivated and dedicated regional team, talented folks in the field, partners waiting to assist, and the resources to pull it all together. We hope you'll join us. ➤

## CELEBRATE THE REFUGE SYSTEM CENTENNIAL!





# Pelican Nesting Expanding at Horicon Refuge

by Molly Stoddard, Ranger

A colonial bird survey conducted on July 2, 2001 revealed a growing colony of American white pelicans nesting on Horicon National Wildlife Refuge.

## From 16 to 152!

Numbers of nestlings mushroomed from 16 in 2000 to 152 this year. They have also expanded their nesting territory from a handful of small, rocky islands in the middle

“American white pelicans have been seen on the refuge in increasing numbers and for an increasing duration of time for the last several years,” stated wildlife biologist Diane Penttila. “They have even nested here for at least the last three years. It is difficult to determine how many nests were built because once the young hatch, the nests are no longer visible and often obliterated by the mobile young birds.”

## Minimal Disturbance

It certainly helps that canoeing and boating are not allowed on the refuge so there is minimal disturbance to wild birds like these which are so sensitive to human activity. Horicon Marsh historically supported white pelicans, but unregulated shooting likely contributed to their decline in the 1800s. Large white birds were easy targets for market hunters. Like the bald eagle, the white pelican was also susceptible to the DDT poisoning that decimated so many other birds. It's great that species like pelicans are re-establishing themselves in the refuge, indicating improved health of this incredible wetland ecosystem as we strive to restore and protect it for wildlife.

There are only two other places in Wisconsin which reliably support pelicans: Green Bay and the Mississippi River. Nesting pelicans have not been found on the river, but remote, undisturbed islands in Green Bay do support nesting pelicans.

## Observe with Scope

Visitors to the refuge may observe these birds on their nesting islands using spotting scopes provided on the deck at the visitor center. Because of the



Jack Bartholmai



Jack Bartholmai

*Pelican eggs in their loosely constructed nest on the ground.*

of the refuge to now include neighboring Cattail, Pelican, and Snag Islands.

## One of the Largest Birds

Adult American white pelicans weigh 16 pounds and have a nine-foot wing span, making them one of the largest birds. Ground-nesters, these immense white birds have black wing feathers and a large yellow-orange or pinkish bill. They inhabit coastal waters as well as the interior of North America, unlike brown pelicans, which are typically ocean birds.

distance and season, heat convections may interfere with clear viewing, so early morning hours work best. The center is open 7:30 am to 4:00 pm Monday through Friday in the summer. Hikers and bicyclists on Main Dike Road, State Highway 49, or Old Marsh Road should also look for pelicans flying overhead or swimming. (Old Marsh Road is open summer weekends ONLY for hiking and bicycling ONLY.)

## What to look for

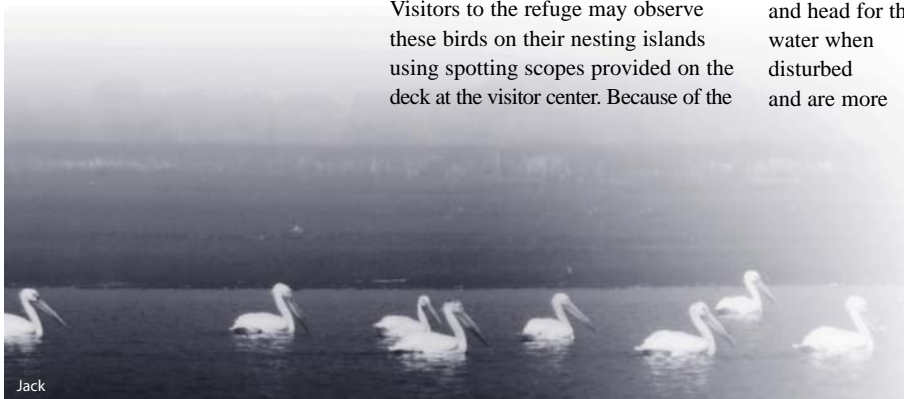
Viewers can look for special markings on the birds when within close range. Breeding birds have a bony plate called a tubercle on the upper bill. Once chick-feeding begins, the plate drops off and black feathers appear on the back of the head. Their eye color changes between dark and light depending upon breeding status.

Colonial bird surveys are conducted by airboat from a distance since young pelicans will panic and head for the water when disturbed and are more

vulnerable to predation without protection from adults who likewise take wing.

## Three Pounds A Day?

Pelicans mainly eat fish, about three pounds per day. American white pelicans do not dive for their prey like their brown cousins but dip their heads below the water while swimming. They will also feed cooperatively using their feet and wings to corral fish into a circle or corner. They are buoyant and not built for diving. ➤



Jack



Jack Bartholmai

# Three Road Construction Projects Completed

By Molly Stoddard, Ranger

Three road construction projects began June 25 and were completed in November.

### Auto Tour Route

The auto tour route and three hiking trails, including the popular floating boardwalk, are located on the north-western corner of Horicon Marsh, on the south side of State Highway 49.

Renovation of the entrance driveway to the main parking lot of the hiking trails and Horicon TernPike Auto Tour resulted in the closure of the route as of June 25.

This allowed for crews to flatten the hill coming into the main parking lot, improving the line of sight for drivers and safety for bicyclists.

### Renovation of the Auto Tour includes:

- A wider and asphalt-paved route, interpretive pull-offs, midway parking lot
- Safer re-design of the entrance road to the main parking lot
- A trail linking the entrance drive to the Wild Goose State Trail to the west
- Addition of a sidewalk and two vault toilets at the main parking lot. (in Spring 2002)

### Office/Visitor Center

Headquarters Road is the entrance drive to the refuge visitor center and headquarters, located on the east side of the refuge on County Road Z, 3.5 miles south of State Highway 49.

Headquarters Road was re-paved. The visitor center parking lot was redesigned to include an expanded, safer parking area due to increased public use.

### New lot includes:

- Spaces for 60 autos, four autos for people with disabilities, three buses or recreational vehicles, and one bus/RV for people with disabilities
- Pedestrian sidewalk access across the lot to the visitor center
- Curbing and improved grading
- A separate service route for access to the employee parking lot and maintenance complex
- A fully paved employee lot with access for people with disabilities
- Improved traffic flow design

Former size and design of the visitor lot allowed for 20 autos, one auto for people with disabilities, two buses, and shared traffic flow with refuge vehicles and deliveries.

### Highway 49 Viewing Area

The Highway 49 Viewing Area is located on the south side of Highway 49 just west of County Road Z.

The new parking lot has an improved grade for better drainage, and is reduced in size by 50% due to reduced public use in that area. The eastern half of the lot was removed, and the ground was seeded in native warm season grasses. A sidewalk was added along the west edge of the parking lot, providing a safer link between the interpretive kiosk and restrooms. The lot and entrance and exit drives are newly paved and re-designed for improved safety.

### TEA 21

The \$1.1 million cost for these refuge construction projects are paid for by funding of the Transportation Equity Act, or TEA 21, representing the first time the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service has used this federal highway funding source. Northeast Asphalt of Fond du Lac, WI was awarded the contract. ➤



Jon Krapfl

# Continuing to Restore the Marsh Fishery

by Molly Stoddard, Ranger

Follow-up efforts to the carp eradication project continue with restocking fish and operation of a carp trap on the refuge.

Since the carp treatment in January, 2000, and up until July 2001, a grand total of almost 800,000 northern pike, yellow perch, bluegill, and large-mouth bass have been stocked on a number of occasions on the refuge. Staff first brought fish from Rush Lake and a state hatchery, but most have come from Genoa National Fish Hatchery in Genoa, WI (also operated by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service). Sizes ranged from less than one inch in length up to 28 inches

long. They have been released at a variety of locations both on the perimeter of the refuge and deep within.

### New Carp Trap

In addition, staff constructed a new carp trap on the refuge along the west branch of the Rock River adjacent to the auto tour route. The trap helps keep carp in check by catching them as they move upstream out of the refuge, especially in winter when they seek oxygenated water upriver.

The trap is irregularly shaped and measures roughly 30 feet by 40 feet. It is made of reinforced iron bars



Molly Stoddard

FWS employee Dan Kumlin from the Genoa National Fish Hatchery helps with restocking efforts at the marsh.

Continued on page 10



# Partners Orchestrate "Marsh Melodies"

by Molly Stoddard, Ranger

Horicon NWR will continue to help orchestrate a spring series of special events called Marsh Melodies, a unique partnership effort conducted with various marsh stakeholders to promote our spring shoulder season to tourists.

In October, Governor Scott McCallum announced that the Marsh Melodies Steering Committee received its second Joint Effort Marketing grant (JEM), this time for \$18,000. The grant will again fund an extensive media promotional campaign.

### Planning Underway

Planning is currently underway for a second Marsh Melodies, April 20 through May 26, 2002. A full range of visitor activities will again include effigy mounds tours, guided canoe tours, guided wildflower hikes, bird watching, a circle tour guided bicycle ride, and much more. The weekends and themes will be:

#### April 20 & 21

Bats, Rats & Habitats

#### April 27 & 28

Native Heritage Archaeology

#### May 4 & 5

A Splendor of Spring Wildflowers

#### May 10, 11 & 12

Horicon Marsh Bird Festival

#### May 18 & 19

History of Horicon Marsh Area

#### May 25 & 26

Pedal & Paddle the Wetland

A multitude of marsh communities and organizations (including the Refuge) united on 2000 to apply for



and receive a \$40,000 reimbursable matching JEM grant. The six-week-end series of events will emphasize the various sights and sounds, natural events, and moods of Horicon Marsh that occur throughout spring.

### Diversified Programs

In 2001, it resulted in an increase of six new weekends of expanded and diversified public programs, almost 3,000 additional visitors to three key sites on the refuge, an additional five weekends of the Refuge Visitor Center being open, and an additional 500 people enjoying the Visitor Center. Artistry students created a multi-media production and display of Marsh Melodies murals in downtown Mayville shop windows. The murals were auctioned off to start a scholarship fund for local art students, and most of the murals were donated to the Refuge Visitor Center where they will be displayed.

### Grant provided extensive promotional opportunities

Through coordinated efforts, the Marsh Melodies Committee developed themes and events for each weekend, a brand image for the marsh, and a slogan "Horicon Marsh, Where People and Wildlife Come Together" The 2001 grant provided extensive promotional opportunities including:

- Design of Horicon Marsh logo

- Advertisements in five major regional magazines which generated over 5,000 customer responses
- Production and two airings on network TV of "A Natural Experience - Horicon Marsh" by Discover Wisconsin Productions to 1.4 million viewers which generated almost 1,000 responses (available on video for sale at Coots Corner at the Refuge Visitor Center!)
- Web hosting, site design, and maintenance which generated over 53,000 responses
- Production and distribution of 150 print media kits and 50 radio media public service announcement kits which produced over 200 responses
- Printing and direct mailing of 50,000 Marsh Melodies brochures and 20,000 bird festival booklets, research and tracking of information requests and visitor info
- Opportunity to re-apply for two more years of funding

### Certificate of Commendation

Former Governor Tommy Thompson recognized this partnership effort with a Certificate of Commendation presented at the Discover Wisconsin premiere party. Future spin-offs include a Discover Wisconsin episode on the Refuge System Centennial at Wisconsin's national wildlife refuges.

(See separate article about the Centennial.)

Marsh Melodies partners include Mayville, Waupun, and Horicon Chambers of Commerce, Fond du Lac Convention and Visitors Bureau, Dodge County Tourism Association, Horicon Marsh Bird Club, Rock River Archaeology Society, Mid-America Geographic Foundation, Marsh Haven Nature Center, and the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources and their Friends' Group.

Many of the partners agree that none of us could develop and conduct Marsh Melodies alone, that our strength in numbers is key to the success of the project. I am hopeful that Marsh Melodies will serve as a model partnership, a springboard for future conservation endeavors and problem-solving, a vehicle for an ecosystem approach to management which includes people, cities, cultures, and economies. Bravo! Marsh Melodies is deserving of its encore performance in 2002. ♪



Rick and Stephanie, hosts of Discover Wisconsin



## Leopold Wetland Management District is Moving

By Jim Lutes, Wildlife Biologist

During this summer, some Leopold WMD staff relocated to the Baraboo River Waterfowl Production Area near Portage, Wisconsin. This move will build stronger community relationships for the recently approved initiative titled A Fairfield Marsh: A Conservation Partnership (formerly called the proposed Aldo Leopold NWR). It will also increase building space for both the Refuge and the District. If you would

like to get in touch with Sean Sallman (Biological Technician), Rhonda Byers (Private Lands Biologist), and Jim Lutes (Wildlife Biologist),

**WRITE TO: WI 0040 Cascade Mountain Rd, Portage, WI 53901  
OR CALL: 608-742-7100**

Allen Anderson, Steve Lenz, and Sheldon Myerchin will move at a later date and can still be reached at the Refuge headquarters. ♪



# The Breitbachs

By Kevin McIver, Public Relations Volunteer



BARBARA & GENE BREITBACH reflect this unique character as this issue's volunteer spotlight shines on them. Residents of Rosendale, Wisconsin, the couple volunteers at the Refuge where they assist the staff at the visitor center one day a week during the fall Canada goose migration. They have been volunteering since 1984 and have worked more than 175 hours each since then.

When not answering questions at the center, they assist with clerical duties. "On slow days...we help ranger Molly Stoddard get all her publications together to hand out to

her school children or elderly for an environmental talk or hike."

Before the current visitor center existed, the Breitbach's volunteered during the weekends by staffing an unheated, makeshift shack overlooking the marsh.

"Visitors came looking for the geese during the fall migration," noted Barbara, 76, who retired from administrative work in 1986. She stated they had a small amount of literature to hand out, but the visitors liked to talk to a volunteer and ask, "Where can we find the geese?" That spirit of volunteerism continues today. Barbara said, "We like talking to the visitors and pointing out the birds they can see and where they can hike or drive to see other birds as well as the Canada goose."

## Year After Year

"Gene and Barbara are dedicated volunteers who help us every year in the visitor center," Stoddard stated. "I know they are involved in many other activities, so I especially appreciate that they are able to make time to help us and serve the public. In addition, their wood carvings and butterfly pins make a beautiful addition to Coots Corner." These are hand-carved by Gene and hand-painted by Barbara and are available for sale.

## Pleased with the future

Married since 1949, the couple said they like what's in store for the

Refuge. "We like the plans for the future. To enlarge the visitor center, where they can give more programs for the children and adults as well," said Gene, 75, who retired as a State of Wisconsin property appraiser in '88.

The Breitbach's give this advice to those interested in volunteering. "It is a good thing to do. It takes up lots of time. You will not be able to say you are bored with retirement and have nothing to do. Just pick a volunteer job that you are interested in, and you will be able to do a good job."

## Unique Perspectives

The Breitbachs are also involved with the Fond du Lac County Audubon Society. According to Stoddard, volunteers like the Breitbach's bring many unique perspectives to Refuge visitors. "Some are expert birders, while others know the local area very well," remarked Stoddard.

## Natural Talent

"Some are refuge neighbors, while others travel an hour or longer to share their enthusiasm and knowledge. But it seems that all of them share a natural talent for working with the people who come to visit us. We are grateful for their time here, because the bulk of our visitors come in fall, and there is no way the employees alone could handle the traffic," Stoddard added. ➤

Brian O'Connell once said,  
*"Volunteering creates a national character in which the community and the nation take on a spirit of compassion, comradeship, and confidence."*

## VOLUNTEER WISH LIST

### WE CURRENTLY HAVE NEEDS FOR VOLUNTEERS TO:

- Help staff the Visitor Center on weekends in Spring 2002.
- File and maintain organization of refuge slides and prints.
- Handle large mailings periodically – great for a group!
- Assist with periodic cleaning out of the carp trap.

If you can help, PLEASE CALL  
 Molly Stoddard at 920-387-2658, ext. 24.

## Youth Conservationist of the Year Award

### Congratulations Beaver Dam Charter School!



The school received the Youth Conservationist of the Year Award from the Wisconsin Wildlife Federation at their annual banquet for all of their hard work in Dodge County and on the Refuge, making our world a better place for wildlife.



The school staff is in the process of developing a marsh-based school curriculum, which is a landmark effort! We're proud to call you our partner, and we look forward to supporting your future efforts. ➤







# Diane Kitchen, Assistant Refuge Manager

By Kevin McIver, Public Relations Volunteer

Diane Kitchen has served as the Assistant Refuge Manager at Horicon NWR since June 1992. Previously, Kitchen worked in various demanding positions at Annada District of the Mark Twain NWR and at Swan Lake NWR, both in Missouri; the Regional Office in Minneapolis, Minnesota; Trempealeau NWR, Trempealeau, Wisconsin; and at Ecological Services in Columbia, Missouri.

### A St. Louis Native

Born and raised in St. Louis, Kitchen holds a B.S. in Fisheries and Wildlife Management from the University of Missouri at Columbia. Kitchen, 39, began working for the US Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) in 1985.

"I started as a cooperative education student, now called the Student Career Experience Program (SCEP) where you work for FWS while you're still in school. Upon graduation, I was placed in a permanent position," she said.

### A Family Affair

Working for the Service is a family affair. Kitchen's spouse, Art, also works for the Service at the Private Lands Office in Madison, Wisconsin. They have two sons, A.J. who is seven years old, and Logan who is five years old.

### Variety and Adventure

Kitchen loves the tremendous variety and adventure that working for the Refuge affords. "Every single day is different," Kitchen stated. "There is nothing monotonous about this job. Some days I know what I'm going to be doing, but other days are chaotic and hectic. Some days I'm at

my desk all day; other days I'm outside all day. Everyday is an adventure, and to put it simply - it's fun! And best of all, I'm doing work for the environment that I have always loved. I also like the people who I work with!"

One of Kitchen's favorite locations at the Refuge is the I-5 unit south of Highway 49. "No other reason than I think it's pretty and peaceful and I've seen lots of critters there. I also like the floating boardwalk," she noted.

### Teaching Children

Another enriching aspect of working for the Service at Horicon NWR that appeals to Kitchen is her involvement in teaching children about the environment. "I really like children a lot, so I enjoy working with them. I believe we can make a difference in children's lives by teaching them about the environment, as well as making a positive impact on the environment since they do represent the future of our earth. Children and the environment are our two most important resources," she remarked.

Improving the Refuge habitat is also of great importance to Kitchen. She believes that this has been accomplished by "getting a handle on the exotic species - the biological control with the beetles and purple loosestrife; the carp; the woody vegetation that is encroaching the grasslands." Kitchen stated she hopes to see these improvements continue to the point of having them under control so that they are no longer a problem.

According to Kitchen, there have

also been great accomplishments involving partnerships among those publics with a vested interest in the Refuge. "We've done wonderful things with partnerships," she stated, "working closer than ever with the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources on marsh management, working with the schools on outreach and environmental education, working with the local communities in visitor services, being part of groups that care about the marsh - the Marsh Management Committee, the Rock River Headwaters, Inc."

### Great Strides

Although great strides have been made in enhancing these relationships, Kitchen would like to see the future bring the Refuge closer to its immediate neighbors. "There is a history of hard feelings due to recent events as well as events that date back to the condemnation days of the 1940s," she noted. "Those feelings will never be erased...but it would be nice to start fresh. We really do value the input of our neighbors and want to be a good neighbor."

### Fond Memories

Kitchen's fondest Refuge memory is when the trumpeter swans were re-introduced to the marsh. She also remarked about her favorite Refuge program, the special hunt for hunters with disabilities. "The hunters are so nice and so appreciative and I feel like I'm making a difference in their lives," Kitchen said.

### A Word of Advice

For those interested in working for the US Fish and Wildlife Service, Kitchen gives this advice. "Volunteer or somehow get yourself known - besides the experience that you'll

receive in volunteering, especially if you intern for an entire summer with a biologist, you will become "known," and it will definitely help when you're searching for a job later. "You may not get paid when you volunteer, but you will benefit immensely in other ways. It's worth it! And keep trying - I tell my kids all the time that they have the choice to be anything that they want to be - it's their decision - they can set the course of their life."

### An Appreciation

Before she became a government employee, Kitchen did not have any specific skills relating to the Service's type of work. What she did have was an appreciation for the environment that continues today. "I have an unusual background in that I grew up in a big city and in a family that was not at all outdoors oriented or even hunting or fishing oriented," Kitchen said. "But I did have an immense fondness for the environment and outdoors and I believe it's because my grandparents had a weekend house on the Meramec River in Missouri, just outside of St. Louis, and I spent a lot of time there as a child," she added. "I knew at a very young age that I wanted to go to school to study about wildlife, even if I never ended up with a job in that field. Well, as things turned out - *I did get my dream job.*"



## ATTENTION TEACHERS!

# School Field Trips to the Refuge

by Molly Stoddard, Ranger

Bring your group to the refuge this fall to enjoy any number of educational programs and field trip experiences. We can also take the show on the road and come to you for school programs. We also sponsor customized teacher workshops and in-service trainings at the refuge or your site. For a complete listing, check out our web site, call, or email me (molly\_stoddard@fws.gov), and I can mail or fax you a brochure.

Please call ahead for a reservation. All of these programs are provided free of charge. Here's a sampling of programs to try – most of them are new!

### Nature Walk

Listen to the story Nature Walk by Douglas Florian, explore a nature trail using color fans, binoculars, and other equipment. Make your own nature walk book of your nature walk at the refuge to take back to school! 2 hours. Preschool-third grade.

### Maunk-shak-kah

Build a time line of the marsh's colorful history. Enjoy a tour of some historic sites on the marsh, and play a game to learn about the geologic, Native American, settlement, and restoration history of Horicon Marsh. 4th-adult. 2 hours or longer. Held in coordination with staff from the Horicon Marsh State Wildlife area.

### Marsh Discovery Bus Tour

Look for birds and learn the secrets of the marsh landscape during this custom-designed, guided tour. A short hike can be included. Step-on guide provided; you bring the bus, microphone, and speaker system. Length and route varies. Especially for tourist groups!

### Marsh Discovery Bicycle Tour

Look for wildlife on the 3.2 mile newly paved auto tour and enjoy this guided introduction to Horicon Marsh via pedal power. Stop for a stroll on the Egret Trail's floating boardwalk. Bring your own binoculars or borrow ours. Bring your own bikes or rent them locally. All ages. Spring, summer, fall. About 1-1/2 hours.

### Welcome to Horicon Marsh!

Find out who's hopping, flying, nesting, and blooming during this introductory talk. Includes a guessing game for kids. Watch a new video about the refuge or a more general one about the marsh. 1/2 hr. All ages.

### Where Wildlife Comes First

Enjoy beautiful music and wildlife photography during this video presentation about America's Refuge System, of which Horicon Marsh is part. 30 minutes. All ages.

### Horicon Marsh Field Trip Guide activities

Both classroom and field trip activities are available for large and small groups. Fly like the geese, collect and examine macro invertebrates living underwater using dip nets, enjoy a marsh scavenger hunt, learn how to use binoculars and take them on a guided bird hike -- LOTS of possibilities, and they are all found in the field trip guide. The guide is available by attending a teacher workshop on the marsh, and in-service, or for sale at our visitor center in Coots Corner for \$15. You must have a copy of the guide to participate in these types of activities. 2nd-8th grades. Times vary.

### Wetland, Wildlife, Bird, and Prairie Discovery Trunks

Each trunk includes posters, books, activity guides, and videos. There's also felt story boards, costumes, and props. Call ahead to book appointments to pick up and drop off the trunks in person at the visitor center. Use them at your site or on the refuge.



Jack Bartholmai

## CALENDAR OF EVENTS

**JANUARY 24, 5:30pm** - Volunteer Recognition Banquet

**MARCH 4-15** - Celebrating a Century of Conservation

**MARCH 9, 9am** - Wild Things Birthday Party

**APRIL 4, 9am**

Training for Visitor Center and Special Events Volunteers

**APRIL 13, 5:30-7:30pm**

Dodge County Sandhill Crane Count

**APRIL 15, 8am** - Main Dike Road Opens

**APRIL 20 - MAY 26, 9am-4pm**

Visitor Center Open WEEKENDS

**APRIL 20-21** - Bats, Rats and Habitats Weekend

**APRIL 20, 1pm**

Dedication of Horicon TernPike Auto Tour

**APRIL 20, 1-5pm** - Centennial Road Rally

**APRIL 20-21, DAYLIGHT HOURS**

Old Marsh Road Open



**FOR DETAILS AND  
COMPLETE EVENTS LISTING,  
PLEASE CALL 920-387-2658.**





## The Wildlife Calendar

# The Redhead Duck

(*Aythya americana*)



By Diane Penttila, Wildlife Biologist

Jack Bartholmai

### MARCH

Most years, at least some redheads have started arriving from their wintering grounds. Most redheads winter in the Gulf of Mexico which ranges from Florida to the Yucatan Peninsula in Mexico but will go as far south as Guatemala.

### APRIL

Redheads are considered diving ducks as they feed by propelling themselves under water with their large feet. Their legs are shorter and situated further back on the body than "dabbling" ducks which makes them efficient swimmers, but they cannot walk on land very well. Redheads have a more generalized diet when compared to other diving ducks, of aquatic invertebrates and vegetation. They usually forage in open areas of shallow water near the edges of pools and will eat whatever is most abundant during that part of the season. Diving ducks, such as redheads also have smaller wings than dabblers and need a "runway" of water to become airborne.

### MAY

If you were to look at a breeding map in any field guide, you would not find redheads breeding anywhere in Wisconsin. Horicon National Wildlife Refuge (NWR) is the exception. One of the main objectives of the refuge is to provide breeding habitat for one of the eastern most population of redheads. Most nesting by redheads occurs in the Dakotas, Saskatchewan, and British Columbia with other isolated sizeable populations such as near the Great Salt Lake in Utah.

Horicon NWR's breeding population can number as high as 2,000 but generally averages just over 1,000 birds.

Most redheads nest over the water by building a nest of rushes and cattail on top of floating material that is anchored to emergent vegetation. Thus the nests have the capacity to float up or down slightly but not much and are only about six to ten inches above the water. Abrupt changes in water levels, either up or down by six inches, can destroy a nest. Nests are usually well concealed in emergent vegetation, but must be near an open body of water to allow females access in and out of the nest area.

### JUNE

Redhead nesting strategy is also unusual. Females fall into one of three nesting categories:

- Lay and incubate their own clutch of eggs
- Lay and incubate their own clutch and also "dump" eggs into another nest
- Lay all their eggs in other nests (parasitic nesters), and not have a nest on their own. Generally eggs are dumped into other redhead nests, but sometimes into other duck species as well, with canvasback the most common victim. Dump nesting can often cause nest abandonment.

A female redhead generally lays 9 - 13 eggs and incubates for 24-28 days. At Horicon NWR, hatching usually starts around the middle of June, but often goes into July. Ducklings are "precocial" which means they are born able to walk and swim, are covered with down, can follow the parents, and find their own food.

### JULY

Redhead numbers on the refuge peak almost always in July after hatching. In the last ten years, the average number of young produced is 250 with the highest at over 525. A couple of those recent years have had very poor nesting due to early summer storms that flooded out nests. Although many birds will re-nest, their success is very low.

### AUGUST

Redhead populations at Horicon NWR start to decline as birds start to drift off, presumably to flock with other redheads prior to migration. Occasionally, a young brood will be seen from a re-nesting hen.

### SEPTEMBER THRU NOVEMBER

Very little staging of migrating redheads occurs at Horicon. The vast majority of birds that nest in the prairie region fly due south through Nebraska and Kansas to Texas. Our birds probably follow the migration corridor that takes them east to Lake Erie and then south from there to Florida.



Jack Bartholmai

# Main Pool Response to Carp Treatment and Drawdowns

by Diane Penttila, Wildlife Biologist

You've heard about it, read about it, you may have seen some TV coverage on it. The Main Pools on both the federal and state ends of Horicon Marsh conducted partial drawdowns in 1999 and 2000, and in January of 2000 a chemical carp treatment was completed. A slight drawdown was also conducted in 1998 on the Refuge.

## It Worked Great!

Well, did they work? I'm only going to speak for our end of the Main Pool - it didn't work that good, *it worked GREAT!* The only thing that could have made it better was if we had been able to have at least one year of a complete or nearly complete drawdown.

The purpose of the drawdowns was to revegetate the large open bodies of water, first with annual plants, such as smartweed, millet, and Bidens, which produce excellent seeds that waterfowl love, followed by perennial plants such as river bulrush, softstem bulrush, bur-reed, and of course cattail. The drawdowns also help stimulate production of aquatic plants, especially sago pondweed, a duck favorite.

## Plants Attracted Ducks

Aquatic plants have not been found on the Main Pool since 1993.

Unfortunately, heavy rain events in both 1999 and 2000 prevented us from complete drawdowns. In 1999,

we still had 3,800 acres of flooded area. But we did manage to have about 400 acres of annual plants develop that really attracted ducks in the fall - see chart.



*Sago pondweed grew incredibly thick in many areas. Good for ducks, good for aquatic insects, good for native fish.*

In 2000, water levels were looking great, plus the water was clear. What a change that was. Additional mudflats were exposed from 1999, but those areas were flooded out in May before they had time to germinate into annual plants. So those mudflats sat the rest of the summer with a couple inches of water on them. At least that is what I thought they were going to do. That's always what has happened before - nothing ever grew on them.

## Cattail Germination

But last summer the water was clear, really clear. And something did start

to grow. It wasn't my first choice, annual plants, but it turned out to be a good thing. Cattail germinated from seed, about 1,000 acres of it. In addition, the aquatic plant I was hoping for,



*Cattail that germinated from seed.*

sago pondweed, exploded. At least 2,000 acres of it grew, if not more. The only areas that did not have sago pondweed were the largest bodies of water where wind may have been a factor in preventing the sago from flourishing. And anywhere that had that new cattail growing was thick with sago.

## Ducks are EVERYWHERE!

Guess where the ducks were? EVERYWHERE! But especially in that cattail. The cattail was thin enough so a bird could swim through it, but thick enough to provide cover.

The annual plants from 1999 mainly grew back into softstem bulrush, river bulrush, and bur-reed in 2000 and were also flooded after the May storms, and those areas also were full of ducks.

## Peak Populations

In addition, when some of the area reflooded, birds immediately moved into nest. (Unfortunately they were re-nesting, moving from areas where their nests had flooded out.) Redheads, ruddy ducks, coots, black and Forster's terns all moved into reflooded vegetation. It was a tough year for nesting in 2000 with heavy rainfall the end of May during peak nesting, but a lot of broods were seen on the Main Pool where most years we feel lucky to see one brood.

Mallard broods were down right abundant. Coots, which are a indicator species of good habitat, were also abundant by fall. They had virtually disappeared from the Main Pool but in October of 2000, coot populations peaked at almost 29,000 birds. When the Canada geese migrated through in the fall, they chewed off all that new cattail about 4 inches above the water.

## 2001 Water Levels

A complete drawdown was also planned for the Main Pool during the spring and summer of 2001. One last attempt, but the weather was not

## CONTINUING TO RESTORE THE MARSH FISHERIES, CONT.

Continued from page 4

which were drilled through holes in the ice into the riverbed. An electrical current of 80 to 100 volts on average guides fish into the trap. Game fish are removed and freed. Staff monitor the trap and remove carp, with plans to use the fish commercially or as fertilizer on local farm fields.

## Offering Expertise

DNR staff from Horicon, namely Steve Krueger and Jacob Fries, were instrumental in offering their expertise in constructing the trap over a seven-day period. This is the fifth trap of this kind that Krueger has constructed. Also, Dodge County's

Wisconsin Conservation Corps crew helped.

Although the trap is located near the auto tour, it is located in a closed area. Also, for safety reasons, visitors should not enter the trap area.

## Regaining a Healthy Marsh

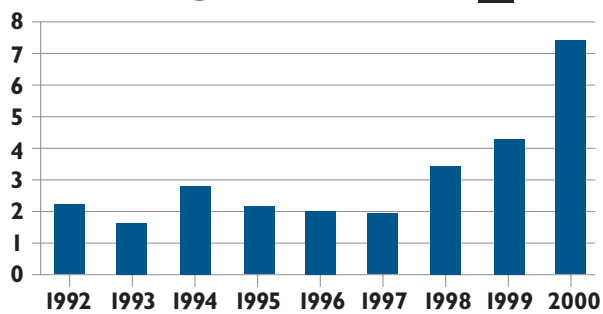
One fish survey has showed a variety of fish represented, including carp, black bullheads, yellow perch, green sunfish, fathead minnow, brown bullhead, golden shiner, and white crappie. Surveys like this indicate efforts to regain a healthy Marsh fishery are succeeding. ➤



*Restocking beneficial game fish is a vital part of restoring the marsh fishery.*



### Main Pool Dabbling Duck Use



**Figure 1** A duck use day is best described by an example. One duck in an area for 7 days would be 7 duck use days; two ducks in an area for 7 days would be 14 duck use days. This figure shows how the drawdowns in 1998 - 2000 helped increase duck use days and then combined with the carp treatment in 2000 really made a difference. And this figure just shows dabbling ducks. Diving ducks, coots, terns, pied-billed grebes numbers all increased too.

cooperative at all. In fact we had more acres flooded in 2001 than in either 1999 or 2000. The cattail that germinated in 2000 was almost completely decimated by the Canada geese chewing it off in the fall, followed by high spring water levels. A couple hundred acres remain at most.

#### Nesting was very good

But conditions during the summer of 2001 were still excellent. The sago pondweed was at least as abundant as in 2000 and maybe even grew in a few new places too. Bird use has been outstanding. And although the unit was not suppose to be available for nesting due to the drawdown, all the bulrush areas and some cattail were flooded. Nesting was very good. Many broods of mallards, blue-winged teal, and redheads have been seen. Coot broods in some areas were thick. Both black and Forster's terns nested as well. ➤

#### HORICON NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE THANKS YOU FOR YOUR SUPPORT THROUGHOUT THE YEAR

Thank you to the following groups and people for their special support of the refuge over the last year:

- Steve Krueger of the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources for your outstanding contribution to constructing the carp trap on the refuge.
- Sarah Congdon for such a fantastic job designing our newsletter.
- The Midwest Interpretive Association for funding of this newsletter and other public use activities on the refuge.
- Beaver Dam Charter School for your donation of 105 prairie wildflowers and grasses, and for their time and work in planting them at the EE Barn and Deer Tracks Trail at the Bud Cook Hiking Area this past spring.
- ADVOCAP Fresh Start for working so hard on tuckpointing the stone walls of the Environmental Education Barn this summer.
- All the volunteers who finished the Barn tuckpointing during National Public Lands Day Event.

With your continued dedication to the marsh and its wildlife, we can all make a difference, making the refuge a better place!

**THANK YOU FOR YOUR INVOLVEMENT!**

## 2000

**200 VOLUNTEERS** worked over **3,000 HOURS** expanding Refuge staff numbers and capabilities.

**The Beaver Dam Charter School** was selected as the **VOLUNTEER OF THE YEAR.**

**The group of 69 students and teachers** (a record) **worked 1,061 in 2000.** **Cumulatively, about 210 people** have worked **3,547 hours** since 1996 from the school.

**Nature Photographer Jack Bartholmai** of Beaver Dam worked **285 HOURS,** more hours than any other individual.

**The Fond du Lac Senior Center Hikers** worked the **MOST HOURS OF ANY GROUP** (besides the Charter School).



# THE REDHEAD GAZETTE IS BROUGHT TO YOU BY:

## The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

is the only federal agency whose primary responsibility is the conservation of wildlife and habitat. A global leader in conservation, the Service's major responsibilities are for the refuge system, migratory birds, endangered species, certain marine mammals, wildlife law enforcement, and freshwater and anadromous fish.

## The National Wildlife Refuge System

includes 535 national wildlife refuges and over 3,000 waterfowl production areas across the United States, covering 94 million acres of land and water.

## Horicon National Wildlife Refuge

was established in 1941 for the protection of migratory waterfowl. Horicon Refuge is 21,000 acres in size and along with the Horicon Marsh State Wildlife Area forms the internationally-known, 32,000-acre Horicon Marsh. Refuge staff also manage Fox River National Wildlife Refuge in Marquette County and three small wilderness island refuges in Door County called Gravel Island and Green Bay National Wildlife Refuges.

You may reach Horicon Refuge at 920-387-2658 and individual staff at these extensions:

Project Leader:	Patti Meyers	11
Asst. Refuge Mgr.:	Diane Kitchen	12
Biologist:	Diane Penttila	13
Ranger:	Molly Stoddard	24
Fire Technician:	Jon Krapfl	23
Maintenance Mechanic:	Mike Madel	18
Administrative Officer:	Jean Pieper	10
Office Automation Clerks:	Sherry Schwach, Jill Greifenhagen, Angie Schraufnagel, and Mary Hull	

## The Midwest Interpretive Association (MIA)

manages Coots Corner, the sales area located at Horicon National Wildlife Refuge's visitor center since 1995. MIA is a non-profit, 501(c)(3) tax-exempt corporation based at DeSoto National Wildlife Refuge. MIA's purpose is to promote historical, educational, and interpretive activities of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, and other federal facilities. As a non-profit cooperating association authorized by Congress, MIA makes interpretive material available to the visitors of these federal facilities by sales or free distribution. Net returns from these activities are donated to each organization, directly or indirectly. You may reach MIA's business director, Bruce Barkley, by calling 712-642-4121.



Jack Bartholmai

This newsletter is produced by Horicon National Wildlife Refuge and is available in an alternative format upon request. If you plan to attend educational programs or public meetings at the refuge, and if you have special needs, please contact Molly Stoddard at 920-387-2658, ext. 24. Deaf/hard of hearing individuals may reach Horicon NWR through the Federal Relay number 1-800-877-8339. Equal opportunity to participate in and benefit from programs and activities of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is available to all individuals regardless of age, race, religion, color, sex, national origin, disability, or sexual orientation. Persons who believe they have been discriminated against should contact: U.S. Dept. of the Interior, Office for Equal Opportunity, 1849 C Street, Washington DC 20240.

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**AMERICA'S NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGES...**  
*Where wildlife comes naturally!*